on the full increase in the international prices in the domestic consumer prices of these products. The under-recoveries of OMCs on account of PDS Kerosene and Domestic LPG, estimated to be around Rs. 13,558 crore during April-December 2004, were partly shared by the upstream oil PSUs, which benefited from high oil prices.

The pricing mechanism for petrol, diesel, PDS Kerosene and Domestic LPG during 2004-05 has attempted to balance the interests of various stakeholders, *viz.,* Consumers, Government and Oil Companies. The burden borne by oil companies will, of course, go up to the extent that domestic prices are not revised upwards when international prices shoot up, but it is hoped that when international prices stabilise the price band mechanism might be restored, thus moderating the burden of under-recoveries on oil companies.

Natural gas storage

109. SHRI TARIQ ANWAR: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is a proposal to develop natural gas storage facilities;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the purpose of this storage and beneficiaries thereof?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. Many developed countries have created underground storage facilities to meet the eventuality of disruption in gas supplies and to meet the requirements of seasonal demand variation. In India also, it has been decided to develop underground natural gas storage facilities. The proposal is at a conceptual stage. Abandoned gas wells and salt caverns are generally used for this purposes. The gas consuming industries will be the beneficiaries of these facilities.

Oil deposits in Assam

110. SHRI LALIT SURI: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether new oil deposits have recently been found in Assam;